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*Chairperson*: Mr. Penke ..... (Latvia)

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Agenda item 41: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

**Agenda item 41: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions** (A/64/12 and Add.1 and A/64/330)

1. **Mr. Guterres** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), introducing his report (A/64/12), said that while billions of dollars had been spent in developed countries to dampen the consequences of the financial and economic crisis, comparatively little attention had been paid to the impact of the crisis on the developing world, even though it could reverse years of effort to reduce poverty and attain the Millennium Development Goals. The effects of the crisis on population displacement should be examined while keeping in mind the major global trends, particularly population growth, increasing urbanization, climate change, migration, food insecurity, lack of access to water, and increasing energy demand, which also required a global response. In conjunction with the global recession, those trends contributed to the multiplication and deepening of the crises.

2. Currently, two thirds of all the refugees in the world were situated in an arch stretching from south-west Asia through the Middle East to the Horn and Great Lakes of Africa. It was also in that area where three quarters of the 14.5 million internally displaced people supported by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2008 resided and where all significant new population displacements were taking place. In addition, almost half of the people displaced by conflict, violence or human rights abuses lived in Africa. In that regard, the recent adoption of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, the first legally binding instrument on the subject, was a major advancement which could serve as an example to other regions of the world.

3. Contemporary forms of displacement were becoming more and more complex due to a combination of different factors, such as conflicts, climate change, extreme poverty, poor governance and food and energy crises, and they represented, from the standpoint of UNHCR operations, four major challenges: the shrinking of humanitarian space, the shrinking of asylum space, the difficulty of achieving durable solutions and assistance to urban refugees.

4. The shrinking of humanitarian space was due to the fact that a multiplicity of actors in current conflicts had no respect for humanitarian principles or the safety of humanitarian staff; that some countries, on the ground of national sovereignty, did not allow humanitarian organizations to operate in their territory; and that the blurring of the lines that had once clearly separated the civilian and military spheres had been exploited by some to undermine the very foundations of humanitarian action. For UNHCR, which had lost three staff members in a period of just six months, nothing was more important than the safety of staff. It had therefore created a Security Steering Committee to examine the security situation of key operations, make recommendations and enhance other staff security measures such as information-gathering and training. It was also organizing confidence-building initiatives with local communities, proactively communicating with all the relevant actors and strengthening its cooperation with other bodies of the United Nations system in the areas of risk assessment, training and sharing of expertise.

5. With regard to the shrinking of asylum space, while there had been some positive developments in asylum law, especially in terms of alternatives to the detention of asylum-seekers, the trend was broadly towards greater restrictions and fewer rights. In particular, a number of developed countries had limited access to their territories in ways that did not respect the rights of asylum-seekers and refugees under international and regional law. It was neither moral nor acceptable to send asylum-seekers back to countries where protection was not available, or to burden developing countries further. UNHCR thus continued to advocate the implementation of a common European asylum system in order to address an unfair situation that also threatened to aggravate the problem of secondary movements.

6. The difficulty of achieving lasting solutions was directly related to the increasing complexity and intractability of contemporary forms of conflict. Massive repatriation movements were decelerating as a result, in particular, of the deteriorating situations in Afghanistan, southern Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where conditions had become less conducive to the return of refugees. At the same time, the increased receptivity to local integration that

had been evident just a short time earlier had already begun to erode, as fewer refugees returned to their countries of origin and host countries felt the effects of the economic crisis. For developing countries, hosting refugees was an enormous burden. Because voluntary repatriation and local integration opportunities were declining, demand for resettlement was increasing and it was imperative to find additional resettlement places.

7. In the meantime, the number of people in protracted refugee situations was expected to increase. He outlined the main features of the UNHCR global plan of action in that regard. The same risk of protractedness and the need for comprehensive solutions animated the Office's efforts on statelessness, as shown by its work in Bangladesh, where the issue of the status of the Urdu-speaking Biharis had been resolved just in time for the national elections; in the Russian Federation, where an increasing number of those left stateless were being granted nationality; and in Kyrgyzstan, Viet Nam, Côte d'Ivoire, the western Balkans, Iraq and Nepal.

8. In recognition of the strong links between displacement, urban planning and poverty reduction, and considering that the people it was mandated to protect were increasingly residing in cities, UNHCR was currently conducting a study on urban displacement together with a global coalition of municipal authorities and development partners. It had also undertaken a thorough review of its urban operations for Iraqi refugees in Amman, Beirut and Damascus, and had introduced a new urban refugee policy.

9. Recalling the early results of the reform process undertaken by UNHCR, as described in his report (A/64/12), he emphasized that the savings generated had made it possible to free up additional resources for the beneficiaries of the Office's programmes and to bridge gaps in a number of areas (combating malaria and malnutrition, promoting reproductive health and combating sexual and gender-based violence), as well as to implement new anaemia-prevention, water and sanitation programmes. The reforms had also enabled the Office to significantly enhance its emergency response, as shown by the speedy deployment of staff and assistance in response to the recent crises in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The global needs assessment (GNA), a new approach adopted by UNHCR, and its ambitious results-based framework were among the most important of the reforms implemented. Needs-based budgeting had been piloted in 2008 and rolled out worldwide in early 2009. The global needs assessment would make it possible to project the full scale of the beneficiaries' needs for the first time.

10. The process of decentralization and regionalization was ongoing: 67 of the countries in which UNHCR was present were already covered by 16 regional offices, and new approaches were being tested in the Regional Bureaux for Europe and the Americas. Decision-making authority had been moved as close as possible to the point of delivery.

11. The first phase of human resources management reform had been completed with the establishment of an Ethics Office, a whistleblower policy, a Staff-Management Consultative Council, a Career Management Services Section, improved procedures for fast-track deployment in emergencies, a policy on short-term assignments and a new performance appraisal system. The second phase was ongoing and would result in a more streamlined and professional assignments and promotions process, implementation of the new United Nations system-wide administration of justice regime and enhanced recruitment procedures.

12. The change process was moving into a phase of consolidation focusing on oversight and continuous improvement and building on the gains that had already been made. At UNHCR headquarters, a new Division for Programme Support and Management had been created to integrate programme management, analysis and support functions. The capacity of the Division of International Protection Services was being enhanced. All the recommendations made by the European Anti-Fraud Office to augment the independence and integrity of the Office of the Inspector General either had been or were being implemented.

13. UNHCR did not lose sight of the fact that reform was not an objective in itself, but a means by which the Office could become better able to provide protection, assistance and solutions to beneficiaries. By that measure, many of its reforms had already been effective. It had embraced its new responsibilities for people internally displaced by conflict, including leadership of the protection and camp coordination and management clusters, and global leadership in relation to protection in natural disasters. In order to bridge gaps at the field level, he asked Member States to support the proposal to have UNHCR take on the role

of coordinating protection-related activities, such as registration, detection of vulnerable populations and targeted support for women and children.

14. **Ms. Zewdie** (Ethiopia) said that the report of the Secretary-General on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa (A/64/330) contained unfounded statement about displaced persons in Ethiopia, in particular the assertion that reliable data were not available, as access to the areas concerned was restricted, and that the lack of such information had made it difficult to devise long-term solutions for that population, and that the new law on charities and societies would impede action on human rights issues.

15. On the basis of recent statistics from the competent national authorities, her delegation believed that the number of displaced persons in Ethiopia had been exaggerated, and her Government found such interference in its internal affairs unacceptable. Natural and man-made disasters had indeed led to serious humanitarian crises and population displacement in Ethiopia, and the Government was working closely with United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations to respond to the needs of the displaced. Refusing access to those areas would run counter to the objective of its humanitarian efforts. In 2007, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator had led a field mission and had not reported any restrictions on access to sites for displaced persons. Her Government would therefore like to know the sources of the High Commissioner's information, and asked whether he thought that international humanitarian organizations could give sole priority to human-rights-related activities in order to help resolve the underlying causes of conflict-related displacements.

16. **Mr. Idrees Mohamed Ali** (Sudan), recalling that his country was host to refugees from neighbouring countries, said that paragraph 36 of the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/64/12) did not accurately reflect the true situation on the ground. It was surprising to see the issue of the humanitarian organizations that had overstepped their mandate and had had to leave the country being raised again, since it had already been dealt with and other organizations were now on the ground, as confirmed by the assessment team working with the Sudanese Government and the United Nations. The humanitarian situation in Darfur was improving, as evidenced by the return of refugees and the reduction in the number of violent acts, and as the representative of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) had indicated in his report to the Security Council. In addition, on a political level, the Sudan was making every effort to resume negotiations with Darfur, with assistance from Qatar. He asked for clarification about the mandate and activities of the Ethics Office in relation to the human resources reform at UNHCR.

17. **Mr. Metso** (Finland) said that his delegation supported the use of results-based management as a way of strengthening the responsiveness of UNHCR and looked forward to seeing the results of its implementation in 2010-2011 and beyond. He also particularly welcomed the adoption of the GNA strategy. He asked how the GNA might help improve intervention and needs assessment capabilities throughout the United Nations system and, in coordination with other stakeholders, whether there were plans to assess the methodology and applicability of the strategy after an initial period, with a view to potential improvements, and whether it could be applied to the Consolidated Appeals Process.

18. In practice, implementing lasting solutions to refugee situations often meant ensuring the transition from emergency relief to development, and cooperation between the various stakeholders was crucial in that regard. He asked what problems UNHCR encountered most often in such situations and how the efforts made could be strengthened.

19. **Mr. Al-Shami** (Yemen) recalled that in his report (A/64/12), the High Commissioner had cited Yemen as a positive example in terms of hospitality towards refugees, despite the serious economic challenges facing the country. In that regard, he asked whether UNHCR planned to increase cooperation with States facing such difficulties, for which such cooperation was imperative.

20. **Mr. Porquet** (Côte d'Ivoire) conveyed his condolences to UNHCR for its three murdered delegates and expressed indignation at such barbaric acts. His delegation urged the High Commissioner and his team to redouble their efforts to favour a more coherent interpretation of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and expressed support for the GNA. He also asked UNHCR to continue promoting an equitable geographical distribution of managerial posts within the Office.

21. **Ms. Mballa Eyenga** (Cameroon) welcomed the good relationship between UNHCR and her Government. She welcomed the reforms undertaken at UNHCR since 2006; however, some difficult issues still needed to be addressed, such as the security of humanitarian personnel, and she asked Member States to take action in that regard. Her Government was making efforts to ensure security and respect for basic human rights in the country's refugee camps, working alongside various national and international organizations. In that regard, UNHCR provided a range of educational and health services, had given Cameroon's Ministry of Public Health capacity-building support in its fight against malnutrition and, together with other United Nations bodies, had conducted vaccination programmes. Noting that UNHCR was in excellent financial health, she thanked donors for their unprecedented generosity in 2008.

22. Her delegation was concerned about the transportation of food and humanitarian supplies, and would like to know how the international community could improve the security of the ships and what the needs of UNHCR were in that regard.

23. **Ms. Brown** (Australia) said that her country, which fully supported UNHCR and its staff in the field, was concerned about the violence they had been subjected to and the restrictions placed on access for humanitarian aid. The reforms the Office planned and its intention to strengthen the GNA were encouraging, as was its decision to assume a leading role by forming partnerships with other humanitarian assistance organizations. Her country commended the High Commissioner for his renewed efforts and looked forward to participating in the debate to be held the following December on the question of refugees in urban settings. Australia was delighted to be presiding over the Executive Committee, through its Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, and working closely with the High Commissioner in that capacity.

24. **Ms. Bhoroma** (Zimbabwe) expressed concern that the Secretariat continued to present the humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe in a negative and political way, as for example in paragraph 32 of the report (A/64/330), which mentioned the problems faced by "the large number of displaced people in the country". Her delegation wondered how such a statement could be made, given that the Government had not yet determined whether there were displaced people in the country and for what reasons. The political positions taken and the lack of statistical precision in paragraphs 32 to 34 of the report were worrying, particularly the use of vague expressions such as "continuing political uncertainty" and repeated uses of words such as "large numbers" and "many". The country had made significant progress both politically and economically, and the Secretariat should not present its own opinions as fact.

25. Though the report suggested that the presence of Zimbabweans in South Africa was a recent phenomenon, it was in fact nothing new. The report again referred to the outburst of xenophobic violence in May 2008 even though it had been addressed the previous year and the formation of an inclusive Government had meant that, generally speaking, Zimbabweans were now able to remain in or return to the country. The Secretariat should be careful not to overburden the Committee's programme of work with such repetitions and should present up-to-date reports.

26. **Mr. Starčević** (Serbia) drew attention to the burden borne by certain countries, including Serbia, which were host to a large number of refugees and where the issue of displaced persons was a long-standing one. According to the report, there were 341,000 people in protracted displacement in Serbia. His delegation would like to know how the High Commissioner planned to resolve that particular problem in Europe.

27. **Mr. Luo** Cheng (China) noted that the number of refugees had declined in 2008, particularly as a result of the concerted efforts of UNHCR and other international, regional and national organizations, but stressed that there were still many challenges, stemming from security issues, ongoing armed conflicts, or indeed the financial crisis, climate change or extreme poverty. Developing countries received the most refugees, and their burden was still far from becoming easier. UNHCR should continue its efforts to help refugee populations and their host countries, and to prevent any abuses of the protection mechanisms. The Government of China had signed the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its corresponding Protocol had always respected its international obligations on the matter and was prepared to strengthen its cooperation with UNHCR.

28. **Mr. Mosoti** (Kenya) welcomed the High Commissioner's interest in the situation of Kenya,

which was host to a large number of refugees. Some of the displaced people had recently been able to return home and were therefore no longer in the camps. However, there were still 400,000 refugees in two camps, 300,000 of them in Kakuma, plus several thousand more unregistered refugees.

29. Kenya had for too long been suffering the consequences of the conflicts in neighbouring regions, Somalia in particular, and although aid from UNHCR and other organizations was extremely valuable, long-term solutions still needed to be found in order to stem the constant flow of refugees. He would like to know what recommendations the High Commissioner intended to make to Member States in that regard. Moreover, although the voluntary repatriation programmes to the Sudan were commendable, attention still needed to be paid to the impact, in particular the environmental impact, of camps such as Kakuma on local populations, whose opinions should be taken into consideration.

30. **Mr. Selim** (Egypt) said that it was important to find a solution to the age-old and deep-rooted problem of refugees by coordinating the efforts of UNHCR with those of other United Nations organizations. He asked what actions the High Commissioner had taken to improve the security of staff in the field and what was meant by the term "refugee-like situations".

31. **Mr.** Suljuk Mustansar **Tarar** (Pakistan) strongly condemned the attacks that had taken the lives of UNHCR staff members and stressed that it was important to identify and eliminate the threat against them. He asked the High Commissioner what assistance could be given to the local populations in developing countries hosting people in protracted refugee situations, particularly in the light of the current serious financial and food crises.

32. **Mr. Loulichki** (Morocco) lamented the fact that the efforts of UNHCR, which were increasingly in demand as a result of many and various crises, sometimes cost lives. He agreed that the five broad trends outlined by UNHCR called for global cooperation, and noted that there was a gap between the expectations of the international community and the financial contributions it was prepared to make. He hoped that expanding the activities of UNHCR would not divert it from its principal and initial mandate. His delegation would like to know whether UNHCR intended to pursue its policy of relocation, following the successful transfer of certain functions to Budapest, and whether it could contemplate giving Governments guidelines to enable them to coordinate their responses to natural disasters more effectively.

33. **Mr. Guterres** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), in responding to the question from the representative of Ethiopia, acknowledged the scope and importance of the cooperation the Government of Ethiopia had provided to UNHCR. However, he knew from personal experience, and had documentary proof, that the Ethiopian authorities had refused to permit UNHCR to open an office in the south-eastern part of the country to help those who had been displaced owing to violence in the region. The same was true of the Sudan, whose Government worked closely with UNHCR to provide aid to 150,000 refugees in the eastern part of the country and to encourage many refugees to return to the south: although the conclusions contained in his report (A/64/12) applied only to the period concerned, and non-governmental organizations had gained improved access to Darfur since that time, the fact remained that the Sudanese Government had yet to respond to some requests made by the UNHCR country team related to the fulfilment of its mission to protect refugees and manage camps in northern and southern Darfur.

34. He agreed with the representative of Finland that the implementation of the GNA and the *Focus* management tool was a very ambitious project that must be evaluated, especially as it covered the operations of UNHCR overall. For that reason, the resources of the Policy Development and Evaluation Service had been enhanced. UNHCR was working to simplify the tool so that it could cooperate fully with other actors and harmonize emergency needs assessments. In that regard, the requirements associated with the use of the tool should have an inspiring effect on the system as a whole and contribute to strengthening cooperation between UNHCR and its partners.

35. Responding to the representative of Yemen, the High Commissioner said that the savings resulting from internal reform had allowed UNHCR to strengthen its presence in countries whose difficulties in addressing refugee protection were made all the greater by the current economic crisis, such as Yemen (where UNHCR had increased its activities threefold over the past three years) and the Democratic Republic

of the Congo, where it intended to continue intensifying its operations.

36. In response to the concern expressed by the Ivorian delegation, he said that UNHCR was committed to ensuring not only geographic balance in its staff, but also gender equality. To that end, it had established a quota of 50 per cent women at all levels. However, that often caused many problems owing to the fact that United Nations recruitment policies gave priority to other criteria.

37. He commended the Government of Cameroon for its generosity and the exemplary cooperation it had demonstrated towards large numbers of refugees from neighbouring countries. Integration of such refugees did not always go smoothly. The logistical problems referred to by the representative of Cameroon had been experienced primarily by the World Food Programme, which had encountered difficulties in transporting food shipments owing not only to acts of piracy but also to a lack of appropriate infrastructure in some very isolated areas.

38. He commended Australia for its dynamic approach in presiding over the UNHCR Executive Committee and expressed appreciation for its close cooperation with him, which should make it possible to make a great deal of progress in the coming year. In response to the concerns expressed by the delegation of Zimbabwe, he recalled that the observations contained in document A/64/12 applied only to the period under consideration. The situation in Zimbabwe had improved since then, and the paragraphs of the report to which the Government of Zimbabwe objected also contained many positive elements.

39. With regard to the comments made by the delegation of Serbia, he confirmed that Serbia was indeed on a list of five countries with protracted refugee and displaced persons situations and required special attention. He reaffirmed the importance he attached to that situation and announced that a conference on the matter was shortly to take place in Serbia. UNHCR and the Government of Serbia were working with the cooperation of Governments of neighbouring countries to put in place repatriation measures and find innovative solutions to resolve the problem of tenancy rights in a sustainable way.

40. He was planning a trip to China and was gratified by changes in Chinese legislation on refugees, and, in particular, by the incorporation of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees into Chinese law.

41. With reference to the situation in Kenya, he noted that UNHCR, in collaboration with nine other organizations, had set up a host community support plan. In that context, it had committed to implementing development programmes in the region of Dadaab, among others. That support, which had been overlooked for a long time, was needed not only in the interest of fairness, but also in order to ensure protection for host and refugee communities. However, the question of finding a long-term solution to protracted refugee situations was complicated and required much more than humanitarian intervention. Only a political solution could stem the flow of Somali refugees to Kenya, which had recently reached 7,000 people per month.

42. In response to the question posed by the Egyptian delegation, the High Commissioner referred to the notes to table 1 in his report. People in displaced-person-like or refugee-like situations ran the same risks as refugees and displaced persons and were therefore under the care of UNHCR even if, for various reasons, they had not yet been officially registered.

43. He commended Pakistan, which, despite the difficulties it faced, hosted more refugees than any other country in the world, including 1.8 million Afghan refugees. He hoped that the Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas initiative (RAHA), launched in cooperation with the Government of Pakistan, would be extended. Despite recent events, it had received support from a number of countries.

44. He assured the representative of Morocco that UNHCR had no intention of neglecting its primary mandate, which remained at the centre of its concerns. Moreover, the expansion of its activities far from leading to a rise in structural costs, had, to the contrary, made it possible to cut costs by pooling resources. All functions which could be transferred to Budapest already had been, but others, such as information technology support, would be relocated. The number of staff working in Geneva had already been reduced from 1,040 to 720 people. That represented a significant savings, as costs at the new duty stations were far lower. UNHCR was coordinating the overall action plan for natural disaster situations and had already developed guidance material. It was generally the application of the recommended measures that posed

some problems, particularly in countries with weaker administrations or where more support was needed.

45. **Ms. Mtawali** (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), pointed out that to resolve the problem of displaced populations worldwide, the various phenomena which were the root causes of displacement needed to be addressed. SADC welcomed the adoption of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa and called upon all African countries to ratify it.

46. The member States of SADC were host to more than 2 million displaced persons, and despite the political environment which characterized the region, significant headway had been made in 2009 in integrating refugees. Tripartite meetings had been held to allow the return of refugees to their countries, and Angola, Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo were making particular efforts to find a permanent solution to the problem of long-term refugees. SADC believed that in addition to the traditional solutions, a comprehensive approach which incorporated opportunities for legal migration would provide the best chances for success. It was that approach which had motivated the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania to naturalize the Burundian refugees from 1972.

47. Developed economies such as South Africa and the exponential economic growth rates in Angola during the last two years were attracting a growing number of migrants. Host country resources, already hard hit by the world crises, were being put to a severe test. SADC must meet the considerable challenges represented by mixed migratory movements and the influx of refugees into urban areas. Peace and stability were necessary to ensure the protection of persons in vulnerable situations, but it was also important to develop a regulatory framework and to set up sustainable socio-economic measures. The shrinking of asylum space in developed countries shifted the burden of responsibility to other countries. A comprehensive approach must be adopted which linked the assumption of international protection responsibilities to a humanitarian perspective.

48. **Mr. Örnéus** (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, recalled that as of the end of 2008, there were some 15 million refugees and 26 million internally displaced persons in the world who were victims of climate change, pollution, population growth, urbanization, food insecurity, economic crisis and shrinking humanitarian space. The year 2009 marked the 60th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, and the promotion of international humanitarian law was more important than ever: humanitarian space was shrinking, access to populations in need of assistance was denied and attacks on humanitarian actors were increasing.

49. The European Union was concerned by the conditions of displaced persons detained in camps in Sri Lanka and called for their freedom of movement, an overall plan for their return and unimpeded access for humanitarian organizations. Recalling the objectives of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol, the European Union considered that the issue of violations of the principle of non-refoulement needed to be addressed in the context of mixed migratory flows, and that the 10-Point Plan of Action for the protection of civilians in times of armed conflict could be a valuable instrument in that context. The European Union was developing a Common European Asylum System as part of the Stockholm Programme, which the European Council aimed to adopt in December 2009.

50. The European Union noted with deep concern the situation of millions of long-term refugees and urged all States to address the root causes of the phenomenon and to adopt measures for voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement. The European Union was creating a resettlement programme for refugees with specific needs. In terms of repatriation, voluntary return, which was often hampered by insecurity and lack of infrastructure in the country of origin, required that measures be taken to fill the gaps between emergency relief and development assistance. The involvement of UNHCR in the "delivering as one" process of the United Nations was important in that regard. A growing number of persons of concern to UNHCR resided in urban areas, and that posed specific challenges that needed to be reflected in the UNHCR budget. The European Union commended the expansion of UNHCR assistance programmes for

internally displaced persons and welcomed the signing, by 17 States, of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.

51. Partnerships and coordination with other humanitarian actors were fundamental for effective humanitarian response. The European Union supported the cluster system and the common financing mechanisms. It urged UNHCR to support the activities of the Emergency Relief Coordinator at the international level and those of humanitarian coordinators at the national level. It also welcomed the creation of the Task Force on Needs Assessment of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) on Post-War and Disaster Reconstruction and Rehabilitation. It welcomed the structural and administrative reforms of UNHCR and therefore supported the draft resolution on the High Commissioner's Office (A/C.3/64/L.52).

52. **Mr. Lippwe** (Federated States of Micronesia), speaking on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States, emphasized the effects of climate change and noted that the island States of the Pacific were among the most vulnerable countries, particularly to the risk of population displacement caused by climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) anticipated that, by 2050, 150 million persons would be displaced as a result of climate change, and the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change cited the figure of 200 million. In the Pacific region, climate-induced displacement factors included the loss of freshwater through reduced precipitation and salt water intrusion into freshwater reserves, food insecurity due to increased flooding, erosion and salinization of arable land, ocean acidification, rising sea levels and natural disasters.

53. In certain Pacific island States, such as Vanuatu, the Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, population displacements had already begun, causing serious problems in terms of relocation. Owing to the climate crisis, States such as Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu were threatened with becoming uninhabitable or even being submerged. There was good reason to be troubled by the lack of international protection for climate refugees. While the holding of discussions to fill that legal vacuum was welcome, the priority was to prevent migrations and therefore to protect the integrity of the territories threatened by climate change, which was predominantly caused by human activities in developed countries. It was therefore essential for the international community to manifest its political will in that regard.

54. **Mr. Sparber** (Liechtenstein) said that his country was concerned about the situation of the 26 million persons displaced within their countries by armed conflicts and urged all parties to conflicts to facilitate the work of the various organizations in the field, to grant them unconditional and immediate access to refugees and displaced persons, to respect the rights of these populations and to guarantee their protection both inside and outside the temporary camps where they live, particularly from armed violence, military recruitment attempts and sexual violence.

55. The 60th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions should be the occasion to recall that, even though the Conventions had represented a major advance at the time of their adoption, in that they had established fundamental rules applicable in times of armed conflict, they were nonetheless routinely violated in many regions of the world, which was a cause for major concern. The increase in the number of displaced persons as a result of climate change and natural disasters was worrying, as were the projections by UNHCR that, over time, there would be much larger and more complex migrations, which were expected to result in an increase in the number of stateless persons. The international community must pay more attention to those issues and to the legal status of climate refugees, who would need protection under international law and humanitarian assistance.

56. The United Nations Climate Change Conference, which was being held in December 2009, should be the occasion for the international community to become aware of the man-made causes of such tragedies and to reach a substantial agreement in order to be able to respond to the humanitarian challenges awaiting it.

57. **Mr. Miyamoto** (Japan) noted that in recent years the need for humanitarian assistance had increased owing to conflicts and natural disasters resulting from climate change. He expressed concern about the impact of the economic crisis on international humanitarian aid and confirmed Japan's commitment to continue strengthening its partnership with UNHCR and providing it with financial support. The structural reform of UNCHR needed to continue, as that would allow it to streamline its aid work and therefore enable

it to devote more resources to field operations. To that end, the efforts to introduce results-based management through GNA and the *Focus* tool were essential. In addition, the new budget structure would further enhance the efficiency and efficacy of UNHCR's work while deepening understanding of that work among its partners.

58. In connection with the conclusions of the Secretary-General's reports presented in 2009, the representative of Japan emphasized three main points. First, he supported the call for all parties to conflict, including non-State actors, to facilitate humanitarian access to refugees and to displaced persons. Second, he supported the efforts made to universalize international normative instruments, adding that it was vital to respect the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, and invited States that had not yet acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol to consider doing so. Third, he invited the international community to address the root causes of displacement and the problems faced by displaced persons during post-conflict peacebuilding. There was a need to mitigate the impact of natural disasters, which also cause displacement, and all countries were invited to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action. His Government supported structural reform of UNHCR and looked forward to the High Commissioner's visit to Japan at the end of November 2009. In 2010, Japan would be launching a pilot resettlement project in which it would be receiving refugees from Myanmar.

59. **Mr. Mercado** (United States of America) said that his delegation supported the global approach adopted by UNHCR to the discharge of its mandate, but believed that the protection of populations affected by conflict was a moral imperative which must remain a priority. Diplomacy and decision-making on national security played a central role, and States must be made aware of the fundamental rights of internally displaced persons. In addition to the provision of humanitarian assistance to displaced persons after conflict had emerged, efforts must be made to prevent displacement and find lasting solutions for victims of conflict, particularly for the millions of refugees in protracted displacement situations. The United States strongly supported diplomatic action for humanitarian purposes. It was the largest donor to UNHCR, and expected the reforms designed to improve the effectiveness, transparency and quality of its activities to continue.

60. **Mr. Vigny** (Switzerland) also welcomed the progress made by UNHCR in improving the management of its operations, particularly in the field of protection. Primary responsibility for refugee protection lay with States, and he called for as many States as possible to ratify and respect the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol. Switzerland was concerned about the increasing restrictions imposed on humanitarian actors seeking to access conflict zones, and would work to reverse that trend, including by drawing up a manual on the regulatory framework which would be made available to national authorities, international organizations and humanitarian actors in the field. His delegation looked forward to the High Commissioner's dialogue on protection challenges, which would be held in December 2009, and welcomed the new UNHCR policy on that subject.

61. **Ms. Shanidze** (Georgia) said that since the August 2008 conflict, there had been a deterioration in the human rights situation in the Georgian occupied territories of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region of South Ossetia. That had been confirmed by the report of the independent fact-finding mission led by Ms. Tagliavini. Access to the region by humanitarian actors and the international community remained blocked, despite the provisions of the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, notably resolution 63/307 of 9 September 2009. Georgia had been taking steps to register and assist persons displaced since August 2008, and they were receiving socio-economic support and social protection. Georgia sought to address the needs of all displaced persons located in the territories under its control, including those internally displaced since the early 1990s. Measures were being implemented, particularly in employment, education and social services, to enable the relocation of people who were unlikely to return to their homes. The Georgian Government had adopted a revised State Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy on Internally Displaced Persons, and intended to promote long-term integration of those people affected, through an approach based on transparency and dialogue.

62. **Mr. Stenvold** (Norway) underlined that the number of displaced people was increasing as a result of climate-change-related natural disasters and complex emergencies. The African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally

Displaced Persons in Africa was the first legally binding international instrument in that field. Norway encouraged all African Union member States to sign, ratify and implement the Convention and called on donor countries to support the process it instituted. Norway appreciated the importance assigned to the situation of long-term refugees at the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges 2008 and hoped consensus could soon be reached in order for the Executive Committee to adopt conclusions on protracted refugee situations. Norway was a co-sponsor of draft resolution A/C.3/64/L.52.

63. **Mr. Selim** (Egypt) expressed concern at the growing number of refugees and persons displaced by international crises, including the financial crisis, and at the lack of resources allocated to finance the activities of UNHCR. The issue of internally displaced persons should be addressed separately from that of refugees, who must remain the priority beneficiaries of the work of UNHCR. The Security Council was not the appropriate body to address climate change mitigation when many other United Nations agencies were already addressing that issue effectively. Egypt supported all efforts to strengthen the international legal framework, including the Convention Plus initiative and the recently adopted African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.

64. International action in the field of refugee protection should focus on the following four areas: eliminating the causes of conflicts in the world, including by improving States' capacities for development; promoting respect for international refugee law, in complementarity with international humanitarian and human rights law, and ensuring that refugees' human rights were not negatively affected by security or migration concerns; promoting international solidarity and partnerships and assisting States emerging from conflict to build their institutional capacities in order to take care of their citizens; and encouraging refugees' voluntary repatriation to their home countries by financing national programmes, while strengthening international efforts, particularly the role of the Peacebuilding Commission.

65. The refugee issue was first and foremost a humanitarian issue. Its essence however lay in its political and economic roots. The international community, drawing upon the principles of international law, must make addressing that issue a priority for action.

66. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that the Colombian authorities had strengthened the protection system for internally displaced persons in that country, in the fields of prevention, assistance and social and economic stabilization. The constitutional court had also made rulings which had allowed the development of a national programme to guarantee the rights of indigenous peoples affected by displacement. Special attention had also been given to the situation of displaced women, and guidelines had been established for this purpose with the support of UNHCR. Generally speaking, health insurance, education and humanitarian assistance coverage had been extended since the previous year, as had cash transfer programmes, home purchase grants and income generation programmes aimed at facilitating the long-term integration of displaced populations.

67. The annual number of new cases of displacement had dropped by one third since 2002. The High Commissioner's report (A/64/12) did not reflect the progress achieved, because it covered a period of more than 11 years and did not reflect the numbers of people who had returned home or those whose situation had stabilized. She welcomed the assistance provided to Colombia by UNHCR to help strengthen the legal and policy framework, enable affected people to participate in policy formulation, and enhance monitoring programmes. In order to strengthen refugee protection, partnerships and coordination schemes between UNHCR and national Governments were an essential strategy.

68. **Ms. Abdelmageed** (Sudan) said that it was important to provide the Office of the High Commissioner with sufficient resources, so as to ensure that refugees received the necessary services. In the camps in central and eastern Sudan, insufficient resources had been provided and this had led to a serious deterioration in the situation. As a result of conflicts and natural disasters, Sudan had welcomed refugees. However that had also resulted in the presence of Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries. Assuming full responsibility in this regard, the Government of National Unity has adopted a national policy to address this situation, based on the Comprehensive Peace Accords and the Interim Constitution of 2005 and on all international instruments ratified by Sudan. Sudan was striving to

encourage the voluntary repatriation of refugees and return of displaced persons, according to the 1974 Law in this regard. Although progress had been achieved, Sudan lacked the resources to develop essential infrastructure and services and appealed to the international community for assistance in this regard. At the international and regional levels, Sudan would continue to strive to strengthen protection for refugees and displaced persons and to apply the relevant instruments, including the Geneva Convention of 1951 relating to the Status of Refugees, the Protocol thereto of 1962, and the African Union Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.

*The meeting adjourned at 1.05 p.m.*